

**United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service, Science & Technology
Microbiological Data Program**

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Title: Packing and Shipment of MDP Samples		
Revision: 2	Replaces: : 07/01/02	Effective: 4/24/06

1. Purpose:

To standardize the packing and shipping procedures utilized by all participating States collecting samples for the USDA/AMS Microbiological Data Program (MDP).

2. Scope:

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) shall be followed by the sample collectors to pack and ship MDP samples to the appropriate laboratory(ies) for analysis.

3. Outline of Procedure:

- 5.1 Packaging Procedures for Fresh Commodities
- 5.2 Shipment of MDP Samples

4. References:

- Sampling Managers' Conference Call, March 13, 2006
- PDP/MDP Federal/State Meeting, Denver, CO, September 27-29, 2005
- MDP Public Meeting, Washington, DC, April 15, 2002
- MDP Public Meeting, Washington, DC, January 10, 2002
- Program Plan, July-December 2002
- Program Plan, January-June, 2002
- Program Plan, April-September 2001
- MDP Federal/State Meeting, Tallahassee, Florida, January 10-11, 2001
- Workplan for MDP Pilot Study, August 25, 1999

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5. Specific Procedures:

5.1 Packaging Procedures for Fresh Commodities

These packing procedures provide minimum MDP requirements and are presented as general guidelines. Each participating State shall, as part of their internal sampling SOPs, have on file written procedures that include specific details as to the materials and procedures used for packing the MDP samples. Both the MDP SOPs and the State's internal SOPs will be used as the measure of compliance during MPO sampling reviews.

- a. Each site sample shall be packed by the sample collector.
- b. Sample collectors shall use precautions to prevent samples from being contaminated during packaging.
- c. The samples must be placed in a pre-cooled, insulated shipping container.
- d. Fresh commodity samples must remain properly cooled during shipping. An adequate number of frozen cold paks shall be placed in the shipping container, surrounding the samples (top, bottom, and sides) to ensure refrigerated temperatures of the product during transit.
- e. The frozen cold paks should be wrapped in newspaper, paper towels, etc., to ensure that samples do not freeze should they come into direct contact with the cold paks.
- f. The collector shall use a sufficient amount of packing materials (i.e., recycled paper, butcher paper, Styrofoam peanuts, shredded computer paper, bubble wrap, newspaper, etc.) to prevent movement of the produce during transit, thereby protecting the samples from bruising or damage. These packing materials also help keep the samples at refrigerated temperatures and provide insulation against sub-freezing temperatures during air transport.

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- g. If computer/electronic problems occur that prohibit the use of electronic Sample Information Forms (SIFs) and a paper SIF must instead be used, the paper form shall be placed inside a separate plastic ziplock bag and packed inside the same shipping container as the corresponding site sample.
- h. If a sample will not be collected, an electronic SIF must be completed for each site sample not collected and emailed to MPO. If paper SIFs are used, MPO must be notified and the paper SIF sent to the receiving laboratory. (Refer to MDP SAMP PROC-04, Section 5.1.)
- i. If commodities have been grouped for collection, it is permissible for more than one commodity type to be placed directly in the same insulated shipping container. Ethylene-producer and ethylene-sensitive commodities should not be shipped in the same container because ethylene-sensitive commodities could prematurely overripen and spoil. Information regarding ethylene sensitivities is provided in each commodity's Fact Sheet.
- j. If the pre-cooled insulated shipping container will not change hands, thereby maintaining chain-of-custody, it is not necessary for the packing box to be sealed [i.e., the collector "hand" delivers the site sample(s) to the laboratory]. However, the collector must ensure that the container lid fits tightly and securely so that it does not open during transit.
- k. Sample collectors must record on the MDP paper or electronic SIF the time the sample was officially packed for shipment to the laboratory.

5.2 Shipment of MDP Samples

- a. States required to transship MDP samples to other States must use an insulated shipping container (i.e., ice chest, insulated box, etc.) that is capable of maintaining refrigerated temperatures throughout transit.
- b. The return address must be clearly marked on the outside of the shipping container. A pre-paid return shipping label should be included if the shipping

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State wishes the return of the shipping container, packing materials, and/or ice paks. These materials should not be returned by express/overnight mail.

- c. Samples may be boxed and prepared for shipment at the collection site, or transported to a local State office or shipping facility for packing. If samples are transported off-site, samples must be maintained in a cooled container until they are packed for shipment.
- d. If samples are “hand delivered” to a local State office, shipping facility, or State laboratory, sample collectors must ensure that the product is placed in a pre-cooled insulated shipping container along with a sufficient number of ice paks to ensure refrigerated temperatures during transport.
- e. MDP samples must be shipped overnight by a service that results in the sample arriving at the assigned laboratory(ies) no later than the day following sample collection.
- f. The sample collector and State Sampling Manager, and/or primary State laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring that samples are shipped to the correct laboratory(ies) as provided in the quarterly MDP Sample Shipping Assignment Charts.
- g. Samples shall be shipped so that arrival at the laboratory occurs on a weekday.
- h. The sample collector and/or primary State laboratory shall be responsible for ensuring that samples are shipped to the correct laboratory(ies) as provided quarterly on MDP Sample Shipping Assignment Charts.
- i. Samples shall not be shipped on Friday or the day before a Federal or State holiday.
- j. Sample collectors should receive prior approval from the laboratory for any samples arriving on Friday or the day before a holiday.

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- k. Copies of shipping transactions for all samples shall be kept on file by the State for a period of time in the event that shipping problems arise.
- l. Any additional information regarding packaging, shipping, and temperature requirements of commodities will be provided in MDP Fact Sheets or sent to State Sampling Managers in writing from the MDP Sampling Manager.

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4/21/06

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